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New York

President: Mr. Jan Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minster of Fiji

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji.

The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Qarase (Fiji): Please accept, Mr. President, the warm congratulations of the Republic of the Fiji Islands on your election to lead this forum. I also extend my appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea, for his guidance of the General Assembly during the past year. We also wish to congratulate Switzerland on its admission to the Organization, as well as East Timor on its imminent membership of the United Nations. Their membership gives them a direct share in the collective responsibility of the United Nations to promote world peace, security and development.

When I last spoke here, in September 2000, my country was in the throes of its most dangerous crisis, following an armed uprising against the elected Government. However, with God's help and with the support of our own citizens and the understanding of friends overseas, we have passed through the worst. We returned to parliamentary democracy through general elections in August last year. We have been welcomed back into the Commonwealth and granted leadership of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Recently, we hosted the third summit of ACP leaders, as well as the thirty-third meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum. Our economy is growing again, and we have just concluded a successful national consultation on strategies for development. We have also embarked on a reconciliation effort to strengthen peace and harmony in our multiracial society.

Today I thank the Member States of the United Nations and the United Nations system for their support and understanding during our period of crisis. They stood with us, with words of quiet encouragement, and expressed confidence in our ability to resolve our own difficulties. There were others who were judgmental and strident. Their approach was not helpful. We remind them of the founding principles of the United Nations: respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States. Countries have the right to seek, and to put into effect, their own solutions to their problems.

Not far from this site is the desolate and empty space of Ground Zero. It is a scar not only on the face of this city; it is a scar on the world, a terrible reminder of an unspeakable act of horror. We in the Pacific share America's pain. We cannot feel it in all its intensity, but we have a sense of the anguish and the anger. Our thoughts and prayers have been with the American people. We remember the innocents of so many races and faiths whose blood was spilled by hate, including

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those killed in Kenya, Tanzania and other places, through wanton acts of terrorism. Let it be known that the small nations of the Pacific join the United Nations and all right-thinking countries in the fight against terrorism.

In the Pacific Ocean, we are far from the world's centres of power and areas of conflict and tension, but we are very conscious that, today, no country is beyond the reach of fanatics all too ready to kill and maim at random. The Pacific's response to the heightened threats of terrorism and transnational crime is contained in the Nasonini Declaration on regional security. This was adopted at the recent meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum, which I had the honour to chair. The Declaration binds the Pacific Islands Forum States to the implementation of internationally agreed anti-terrorism measures, such as Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and the special recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force. Forum countries have undertaken to introduce legislation and other measures to combat terrorism and terrorist financing. We will similarly act against drug trafficking, people smuggling and money laundering, in accordance with work undertaken by such organizations as the United Nations.

The summit of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) in Fiji in July lent the weight of 78 States, with 650 million people, to the anti-terrorism campaign. Its Nadi Declaration strongly condemned the 11 September attacks and terrorism in all its forms. ACP countries want terror to be fought politically, legally and operationally and in keeping with the United Nations Charter. We made the point that the root causes of terrorism, including poverty, underdevelopment and oppression, must be treated.

The member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum are heartened that at last there is an awakening to the importance of the oceans. The international community is starting to see that the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans are vital to the survival of the human race and this planet. It was a significant achievement for us that the Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development had a comprehensive section on oceans and numerous allied issues. The Summit specifically recognized that oceans, islands and coastal areas are essential to the Earth's ecosystem and critical to food security and the economic welfare of many developing countries.

While the island States are small in population and area — in contrast to the billions who occupy the large land continents — we have something no other international grouping possesses. Our Pacific heritage gives us sovereign authority over nearly one sixth of the Earth's surface. The Pacific has been described as the last frontier, its depths still largely unexplored, its total resources unknown. This almost boundless body of water contains great biological diversity, the most extensive coral reefs in the world, seabed minerals and the largest sustainable tuna fishery. Humankind still does not know what forms of natural energy it may produce.

It is our responsibility, as people of the islands, to protect and nurture the Pacific. We must do so not only for ourselves, but for people everywhere. For the first time, we have adopted a regional ocean policy which lays out the guiding principles for promoting the Pacific as a maritime environment in support of sustainable development. These principles are based on international law, reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other international and regional agreements. The policy's objective is to improve our understanding of the Ocean, maintain its health and ensure environmentally sound use of its resources and riches. It also recognizes that we cannot take on this task alone and that we will therefore need to develop partnerships and promote Pacific cooperation.

For Pacific islands peoples, the ocean environment is an integral part of their ethnic and cultural identity and way of life. It is because of the importance of the sea and its resources to them that they are so adamantly opposed to any action which exposes the Pacific Ocean to pollution, hazardous waste and the destructive effects of nuclear and missile tests.

Recently, radioactive materials have been trans-shipped across the Pacific in arrogant defiance of our protests. We are told there is no risk, but when we propose payment of compensation if there should be an accident, there is instant rejection. The danger these shipments pose to us is underscored by the disaster off the coast of South Africa, where a freighter ran aground with a hold full of toxic chemicals. We read of a ship carrying hazardous cargo on fire in waters off Britain.

We do not want the Pacific put at risk in this way. We know too well the legacy of radioactivity from nuclear-weapons testing. People in parts of the Pacific continue to suffer from the fallout. We are still waiting for those who committed these acts to take full responsibility for what they have done.

There are real hazards to low-lying atolls from another by-product of this era of environmental crisis. Rising sea levels caused by global warming will lead to the disappearance of some islands. They will sink beneath the waves. Do not therefore be surprised if in future environmental refugees from Oceania are forced to seek sanctuary elsewhere.

The world should also not be surprised at the strong call from the Pacific for the adoption and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. We praise those nations that have signified their intention to ratify. To those who have not done so, we pose the same question we asked in Johannesburg: Will you display the courage, generosity and largeness of spirit the world needs from you? Will you join fully in saving the Earth from the gross abuse and destruction of its resources?

We have done much in the Pacific to secure our ownership of the rich regional tuna fishery. Ten years of combined effort, negotiation, lobbying and painstaking legal drafting led to the adoption of the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention in 1982. When it came into force, international law allowed us to lay claim to huge areas of marine-resource jurisdiction through archipelagic regimes and 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zones. We established the Forum Fisheries Agency to coordinate our efforts to get the best returns from valuable tuna stocks. There was a successful conclusion to negotiations with America for a regional fisheries agreement. I pay tribute here to the United States for its willingness to reach an accord and for agreeing to its extension to 2013.

We still have much to do, however, to consolidate our position and to ensure that we bring an end to exploitation, which continues unabated. We are angered by the indiscriminate commercial exploitation of our tuna by distant-water fishing fleets. They have no compunction about using purse seine methods and drift nets, which take huge amounts of small tuna and destroy other species. We call on those nations to act responsibly and to stop this ruthless exploitation. The reality is that more than 95 per cent of the annual value of the South Pacific catch is taken by them. Where arrangements for fees to be paid do apply, the return to the region is less than 3 per cent of the annual commercial worth of the harvest. Obviously, we must redouble our efforts to improve our ability to receive a fair share of these resources from harvesting and processing.

The next step is to bring into effect the Western and Central Pacific Tuna Convention. This will establish a commission to secure long-term sustainability. The Convention recognizes that the standards of other regions cannot be applied to us and that our interests will be safeguarded against more powerful and economically superior Powers.

We very much welcomed the undertaking by a number of countries in Johannesburg to permit quota and tariff-free market access to the least developed of the developing countries. We urge them to extend the same access conditions to developing island States. We know that free trade, as espoused by the World Trade Organization, is the ideal. All nations will trade on the same basis of equality and fairness, but what a large gap there is between the ideal and the reality. The developing countries hear huge amounts of free-market rhetoric from the rich nations, but it is completely cancelled out by the reality of continuing protectionism. There is no level playing field for the poorer nations, only a steep and slippery slope. That is why we must move carefully into an integrated system of world trade and allow special treatment for those developing countries that are especially vulnerable.

It is in furtherance of this that I make a plea for the acceptance of small island developing States as a special case for trade and aid assistance. This would bring them into line with the least developed and landlocked developing countries.

Next week will see the commencement of formal negotiations between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries on new partnership arrangements under the Cotonou Agreement. The ACP States look forward to strengthening the partnership with the European Union started under the Lomé Convention in 1975. It is also their hope that the new economic partnership agreements will incorporate commitments made by the European Union member countries at Johannesburg.

The United Nations was conceived to seek the betterment of people and to foster security and peace in the world. It has had its failures, and it still has its critics. But let us not forget the successes and its influence for good. Consider where we would be without the United Nations. We believe it has a continuing role and a future, given the commitment of the membership to its governing principles.

I am pleased to assure the Assembly that the Pacific Island Forum and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group strongly support our Secretary-General's new emphasis on preventive diplomacy. Conflict prevention and peace-building should continue to be the central considerations in involvement by the United Nations in ongoing efforts to deal with conflict and crisis situations in the Middle East and elsewhere.

We congratulate the United Nations on the success of its various peacekeeping operations. Fiji's participation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), after more than 24 years, will conclude in December this year. It has been a great honour for us to serve the international cause of bringing peace and order to that part of the Middle East.

Fiji reaffirms its willingness to continue its participation in United Nations and international peacekeeping operations. All this has cost us dearly in lost lives, but it is a price we are willing to pay for international peace and security.

We live in uncertain times. The world is troubled. We look to the United Nations to provide steadiness and balance at the centre. We look to it to maintain peace on earth and hope for humanity. Member countries of the Pacific Island Forum have committed themselves to promoting and safeguarding the Pacific Ocean as a region of peace. We appeal to all those who are part of our wider Pacific community to embrace the way of peace and to constructively engage in cooperation for development. We welcome China's increasing presence and involvement in supporting and assisting development in our region. China and Taiwan have longstanding differences. All of us in the Pacific want to see them resolve their dispute amicably through dialogue and a common vision.

We welcome the peace mission by the Prime Minister of Japan to normalize relations with North Korea. We hope that his visit will also have the added impetus of encouraging North and South Korea to intensify their contacts and dialogue for a peaceful accord between them.

Japan, itself, is setting an example of how a developed nation can use its resources to help others. In Johannesburg, Japan was more forthcoming than most affluent countries in its willingness to act on the Summit agenda and decisions. It is already playing a very positive role in the South Pacific.

Fiji reiterates its support for Japan as a permanent member of the Security Council, along with China.

In concluding, let me reaffirm that, in a world still threatened by conflict and war, the Pacific Island Forum and the ACP Group stand firmly for peace. We say the best way of securing that and protecting our precious planet is to uphold the multilateralism represented by the United Nations and its family of nations. For peace to endure, the United Nations must continue to ensure that development and opportunities for economic and social progress are spread and shared evenly among all its Member States.

At Johannesburg, we all agreed to promote partnerships to assist developing countries in dealing more effectively with the basic needs of their peoples. From our experience with our trade and development partnerships, with Australia and New Zealand and with the European Union, the Pacific Islands and ACP countries commit themselves to working closely with the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations, like the World Trade Organization, in promoting similar partnerships with other developed countries.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Laisenia Qarase, Prime Minister and Minister for Fijian Affairs of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable James Francis Wapakhabulo, Third Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda.

Mr. Wapakhabulo (Uganda): On behalf of the delegation of Uganda, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the deliberations of the fifty-seventh regular session of the General Assembly. We express appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-Soo, for a job well done. We also congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the outstanding work he continues to perform on behalf of the United Nations and the international community.

Uganda welcomes to the membership of the United Nations two new members, the Democratic Republic of East Timor, which is soon to become a Member, and the Swiss Confederation, whose admission to the United

Nations brings closer to realization the goal of universality of membership of this global Organization.

One year after the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the primary role of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security must be strengthened, in order to ensure that the tragedy that befell New York City and Washington D.C., last year is not repeated anywhere on this globe. The United Nations, together with all Member States, must make every effort to eradicate the scourge of terrorism from the world. The Government and people of Uganda stand united with all peace-loving countries of the world in condemning and resisting acts of terrorism carried out by cowardly and barbaric forces. The use of indiscriminate violence cannot be justified under any circumstances and, therefore, must be roundly condemned.

The people of Uganda have been victims of senseless acts of terrorism perpetrated by terrorist groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) for many years. Uganda is committed to efforts to bring the perpetrators of terrorism and their collaborators to justice. Uganda is ready to cooperate with other countries in the implementation of the provisions of existing international anti-terrorist conventions, as well as the conclusion of new international instruments to counter terrorism comprehensively.

At the domestic level, Uganda recently enacted a law called the Suppression of Terrorism Act. The enactment of that law is clear testimony to the commitment of the Government of Uganda to fight terrorism both at home and abroad.

The scourge of conflicts on the African continent has for decades been one of the major contributors to socio-economic decline, causing untold suffering, as civilian populations are forced into living as refugees and internally displaced persons.

Bearing that in mind, we welcome the historic decision of the inaugural Assembly of the African Union to establish the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to deal with the scourge of conflicts in Africa and to ensure that peace, stability and security prevail on the African continent. Uganda has duly signed the Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council. As a collective security and early-warning body, the Peace and Security Council will enhance Africa's capacity to manage conflicts by facilitating timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situations on the continent. I wish to call upon our development partners and upon the international community at large to support Africa in this new endeavour.

In conformity with our commitment to restore peace and stability in the Great Lakes region, and consistent with the spirit of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, the Presidents of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed an Agreement in Luanda, Angola, on 6 September 2002. That agreement provides for total withdrawal of Ugandan troops from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, normalization of relations and cooperation in the economic and social fields. Under the Agreement, Uganda undertakes to withdraw all its troops from Beni, Gbadolite and Bunia within a period of 100 days. As of now, we have withdrawn all our troops from Beni, and by the weekend we shall have no troops in Gbadolite. At the same time, the two countries agreed to establish a joint security mechanism for the western slopes of the Rwenzori mountains in order to address Uganda's security concerns. Also of importance is the undertaking by the parties to refrain from all types of military and logistical support — including the provision of bases and sanctuary to armed groups, inter-ethnic militias, subversive organizations and all rebel movements — against each other. Uganda is indebted to the Government of The Republic of Angola for its crucial engagement, which led to that breakthrough.

As Chair of the regional initiative on Burundi, Uganda has played a leading role in efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the internal conflict in Burundi. We welcome the conclusion of the Arusha Peace Accord, and I should like to appeal to all the parties to honour the ceasefire and to support fully efforts to implement the Arusha Accord. I thank, in that regard, the Governments of South Africa, Tanzania and Gabon for their tireless efforts. In addition, we pay tribute to former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa for his role as Facilitator. Uganda and the other countries in the region will continue to exert every effort to bring about peace and stability in Burundi. We call upon the United Nations and the rest of the international community to support our efforts to restore peace in Burundi.

Since the Nairobi Agreement, signed in December 1999 between the Governments of the Sudan and Uganda and facilitated by former President Jimmy Carter of the United States and by President Daniel

arap Moi of Kenya, relations between Sudan and Uganda have continued to witness steady and satisfactory progress. To date, the Sudan and Uganda have agreed to restore cooperation in the political, security and diplomatic fields. We have also agreed to establish a joint ministerial commission to oversee further cooperation in all areas.

Uganda strongly supports and is actively participating in the negotiations initiated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development aimed at resolving the conflict between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/SPLA), which culminated in the breakthrough of the Machakos Protocol on 20 July 2002. Indeed, it was in the spirit of hopeful anticipation of peace that President Museveni hosted a historic meeting in Kampala on 27 July 2002 between President Al-Bashir of the Sudan and the Chairman of the SPLM/SPLA, Dr. John Garang de Mabior. Therefore, it is extremely unfortunate and regrettable that the second phase of the Machakos negotiations between the two Sudanese parties has stalled. The Government of Uganda calls upon the international community, especially the countries of the region, to demand a return to the negotiating table by the Sudanese parties so that a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement can be reached.

The situation in Somalia continues to be volatile and the prospects for peace elusive. Following the Arta agreement and the formation of the Transitional National Government of Somalia, the position of Uganda has been to encourage the reconciliation process and an all-inclusive and broad-based administration for that country. It is in that context that Uganda looks forward to the convening of the forthcoming Somali peace and reconciliation conference, which is due to start in Nairobi, Kenya, on 15 October 2002.

Uganda is concerned at the lack of progress in efforts to find a just and permanent solution to the question of Western Sahara, which has remained unresolved since the former colonial Power abandoned the territory in 1975. We urge the United Nations to hold, as soon as possible, a referendum to enable the Saharawi people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

Uganda supports the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland, and we appeal to the two parties to resume negotiations with a view to finding a just and lasting solution to the Middle East crisis. Uganda supports the establishment of a Palestinian State to exist side by side in peace with the State of Israel.

Uganda participated actively and at the highest level at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held at Johannesburg, South Africa. The Summit was clearly one of this year's major events in the field of development. Uganda welcomes the outcome of that conference, which reaffirmed the principles and priorities of Agenda 21. In focusing on poverty eradication, the Summit established the essential integration of the three concepts of people, planet and prosperity. We believe that the challenge now before the international community is to implement, fully and expeditiously, the concrete agreements reached at the conference. This session of the General Assembly must, therefore, translate the aspirations of the developing countries expressed at the conference into reality. We believe that all countries have an obligation to implement the Johannesburg Plan of Action and Declaration on sustainable development and, by so doing, to contribute towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

Uganda welcomes the international consensus reached at Monterrey in March this year, including new development assistance commitments for financing the development of developing countries. We appeal to our development partners and to international financial institutions to provide additional resources and to honour the agreed targets for official development assistance. The priority accorded to the eradication of poverty by the Millennium Summit and, in particular, the goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015 will not be realized unless all countries — especially developed countries — honour the obligations and commitments that have been agreed to by the international community.

Uganda is committed to fulfilling the objectives and goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In that connection, we welcome the Group of Eight (G-8) Africa Action Plan, adopted by the heads of State or Government of the eight major industrialized countries at their Summit at Kananaskis, Canada. NEPAD recognizes that the primary responsibility for Africa's future and for its development rests with Africans, but Africa needs support from its development partners. It is against that background that Uganda appreciates the commitment

made by the G-8 Governments to mobilize and energize global action, to marshal resources and expertise, and to provide impetus in support of NEPAD's objectives. We welcome the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the New Partnership for Africa's Development by this session of the General Assembly (resolution 57/2) and the overwhelming support that NEPAD has received from the international community.

Uganda believes that trade — especially free and fair trade — is the engine of growth and development. In that regard, we urge the international community to make every effort to ensure that the multilateral trading system caters for the special needs of the least developed countries with practical measures that can improve their terms of trade, enhance their export capacity and sustain their balance of payments.

The major agricultural products of the least developed countries, such as coffee, cotton, bananas and tea, are exported to several markets, notably the European Union, the United States of America and Canada. Because of that fact, conditions of market access are of critical importance for defining the trading opportunities of the least developed countries.

While Uganda welcomes the African Growth and Opportunity Act adopted by the United States and the European Union's Everything But Arms initiative, we believe these positive developments should be complemented by simplified rules of origin and coordinated programmes of assistance by the donor community to increase the capacity of least developed countries to produce and market more. We are encouraged by Canada's unilateral decision to lift tariffs on African exports to Canada and to abolish subsidies on agricultural products. We urge other countries to emulate this positive example.

The collapse of commodity prices has contributed to a drastic decline in the terms of trade of the least developed countries. This matter deserves urgent attention by the international community if the least developed countries are to be fully integrated into the multilateral trading system. We call upon the international community to implement fully the provisions of the Doha Declaration in favour of the least developed countries and, in addition, to provide technical support to build their capacity in ongoing negotiations.

In the short term, aid can be — indeed, it has been — beneficial for the development of developing countries. In that respect, Uganda would like to appeal to the donor countries to make the necessary effort to honour the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. We thank those countries which have already reached or even surpassed that target.

I would like to say that Uganda supports the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the United Nations system to make it more efficient and effective. Reform of the Security Council is, however, long overdue. We appeal to all Member States to expedite the process of reform, including the expansion of the Council's membership in its permanent and non-permanent categories.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Uganda's full commitment to multilateralism and to the principles and purposes of the United Nations. We are ready to make every effort to achieve the lofty goals set by the international community at the Millennium Summit.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Anna Lindh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Lindh (Sweden): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President.

All speakers in this debate have reflected on the year that has passed since 11 September 2001. It has been a very dramatic year, and it is time for the international community to draw some conclusions from it. One thing is clear: the United Nations responded quickly and resolutely to the terrorist acts against the United States. The United Nations acted with speed and determination to counter that threat to global security.

For me, that is yet further proof that the United Nations is, indeed, indispensable. We all know what the terrorists want: to hurt open societies, to replace cooperation with confrontation and to bring down democracy. But we can never let the terrorists prevail in their ambition. Nor can we tolerate the suppression of political opposition or the persecution of religious or ethnic minorities under the guise of combating terrorism. In fact, it is by ensuring global respect for international law, human rights and social justice that we take away much of the fertile ground of terrorism.

The struggle against terrorism proves once again that multilateral action and a global response are the only sustainable means to meet common challenges.

Fighting terrorism and building peace require global cooperation. The Secretary-General said last week that when States decide to use force to deal with broader threats to international peace and security, there is no substitute for the unique legitimacy provided by the United Nations. That is true also in the case of Iraq. The defiance of Iraq in the face of the Security Council must come to an end. At the heart of the issue lies the question of weapons of mass destruction. They are weapons that can bring suffering and death to millions of people, including those far away from Iraq.

We want to be sure that Iraq fulfils its obligation to halt all programmes for developing such weapons. We also want to make sure that any weapons of mass destruction that may already have been developed are now destroyed. That is the task of the United Nations weapons inspectors. I welcome the announcement that Iraq is willing to let the inspectors return, without conditions. This time Iraq has to cooperate fully with the United Nations. That will also be the right way to go to achieve the suspension of the sanctions.

If that does not happen, however, and if Iraq's defiance continues, as the Secretary-General said, the Security Council must face its responsibilities. That could be a very delicate decision for the Council; it would need to weigh the risks of various options. But the credibility of the United Nations requires that Iraq be made to fulfil its obligations.

Sustainable development requires global cooperation. Throughout the world, poverty and oppression can be exploited by extremists and can give rise to conflict and war. Global cooperation is needed to prevent that from happening. International security and regional stability require the building of democracy, respect for human rights, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Globalization makes it clear that social responsibility is required not only of Governments, but also of companies and individuals — in short, of all of us.

Ecological sustainability is the basis for human survival. Development and the environment are interlinked. In Johannesburg, our nations made a commitment to translate into reality the Rio vision — the mutually supportive integration of environmental and development goals.

The launch of the Doha development agenda opens the way for an equitable and responsive global trading system. New global partnerships have changed the way we look at patterns of production, consumption and sustainable development, but the goals we have set must be achieved. At Monterrey our common responsibility was confirmed. Strong and efficient institutions are needed at the local, regional and international levels to carry out these commitments. We need coherence and consistency. We need ownership.

One of the most serious new threats to security is HIV/AIDS. Efforts to achieve sustainable development will be in vain if we fail in our fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases that still hold entire populations to ransom. When the fundamental structures of societies are crumbling due to the devastating effects of epidemics, we must recognize that as a threat to global security.

The Millennium Declaration is our reference guide. Sweden fully supports the Secretary-General's initiative to launch a strategy for the successful attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Reaching those goals would in itself be the best way to prevent violent conflict. Behind the immediate symptoms of conflict, we often find deep-rooted structural causes.

Even now, however, much more can be achieved if diplomatic, economic and military means are used in a coordinated way. Regional organizations, in cooperation with the United Nations, have an important role to play, and the implementation of the Secretary-General's report (A/55/985) on the prevention of armed conflict is crucial in this respect.

Ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires global cooperation. There is an urgent need to put an end to the occupation and to the spiral of terrorist acts, violence and confrontation that have caused so much suffering and bloodshed in the Middle East.

I deeply regret the two recent terrorist attacks in Israel. I strongly urge both parties not to let the peace process be held hostage by extremists.

The future of the region depends on a peaceful, sustainable and just solution being reached, based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. One way to achieve this is presented in the road map recently adopted by the European Union, building on the proposal from the Arab League meeting in Beirut. The road map includes the holding of elections in the Palestinian territories in January 2003, aiming at the establishment of a peaceful and

democratic Palestinian State in 2005. The rights of Israel and Palestine to security and statehood cannot be secured by military means. They can be secured only by negotiation.

Safeguarding human rights requires global cooperation. Addressing this issue, I wish to begin by paying tribute to Mrs. Mary Robinson, the outgoing United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Through her strong commitment, she has had an impact. She has made a difference, and we are grateful to her. I warmly welcome her successor, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, and assure him of our continued cooperation and support.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights. Still, vast numbers of women, men and children all over the world are deprived of their declared, inherent and universal human rights. Harassment, torture and killings take place daily, including through abhorrent practices such as genital mutilation and stoning. Sometimes the reason for a person's being abused is his or her gender, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, or the fact that he or she is disabled. We have a duty to act against discrimination. The principles of non-discrimination and diversity are fundamental to a humane and decent society. The sovereignty of States must never be used as a shield behind which violations of human rights take place.

The General Assembly has taken the first step to establish an international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. This is a very welcome development.

The Secretary-General's report (A/57/169) on how to eliminate violence against women and girls committed in the name of honour is another significant contribution. Legal, protective and other preventive measures for women and girls at risk should be addressed in a concerted manner.

Human rights are often spoken about, but we also need to put power behind the words. The creation of the International Criminal Court is a remarkable achievement in the progressive development of international law. Its fundamental purpose is to eliminate impunity for crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. We all need to carefully safeguard the integrity of the Rome Statute so that its object and purpose will not be undermined. The rights of every individual must be respected, and every individual, irrespective of nationality or position in society, must be held responsible for his or her actions.

Disarmament of weapons of mass destruction requires global cooperation. International, as well as national, security depends on strong multilateral frameworks. Our task is to implement and reinforce the important international conventions banning or regulating weapons of mass destruction. A verification regime is necessary to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Failure to reach concrete progress at the Review Conference in November will have serious consequences.

The Chemical Weapons Convention provides for the destruction of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction. That is true disarmament, and it should be implemented in a full and timely manner. The Convention will be reviewed in April of next year, for the first time in its young history.

Implementing the agreements made at the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conferences is of fundamental importance. That is particularly true for the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, and 12 other steps towards accomplishing that goal. As part of the New Agenda Coalition, Sweden will continue to contribute to this process.

The disarmament process should also encompass non-strategic nuclear weapons, as confirmed at the last NPT Review Conference. It is vital that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty enter into force. I call upon all States to adhere to that Treaty.

The Conference on Disarmament must start substantive work when it resumes its session early next year. It is unacceptable that a few countries continue to block progress. Sweden, Algeria, Belgium, Chile and Colombia recently presented a proposal for a programme of work that takes into consideration the interests of all parties. I urge China and the United States to actively work for a solution.

The challenges ahead of us are neither fewer than last year nor smaller in magnitude. To face them, we need a modern and more efficient United Nations. A modern United Nations requires a Security Council that reflects the realities of today's international relations. We need to intensify efforts to achieve comprehensive reform of the Security Council. That issue has been discussed for many years, with little success. In the end, it is a question of the credibility and legitimacy of the Organization.

Sweden favours enlargement of the Security Council to make room for increased representation of Member States, not least developing States. We would like to see such a reform have the broadest possible support. If this entailed, as a first step, an enlargement limited to non-permanent members, while not excluding new permanent members at a later stage, Sweden would support such a solution. An immediate increase would better reflect the realities of today's international community and the growing number of Member States.

Let me finish by greeting Switzerland, one of the host countries of the United Nations and warmly welcoming it as a full Member of the United Nations. Shortly, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, a country where this Organization has been deeply and positively involved, will also become a new member of the United Nations family. I see significance in this. I see proof that joint and integrated efforts by the international community can produce remarkable results. It fills me with hope that the United Nations has, in fact, entered this millennium with vigour and determination.

I am convinced that the United Nations is on the right track. Through joint efforts by all of us, the United Nations will continue to be a beacon of hope for humanity in the twenty-first century.

The President: I now give the floor to His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam.

Prince Mohamed Bolkiah (Brunei Darussalam): Mr. President, I extend my congratulations to you and to the people of the Czech Republic on your election. I offer my very best wishes in all your work during the coming session.

I would also like to thank my colleague, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea, our regional neighbour, for his leadership of the General Assembly over the past year.

Also, may I congratulate the Government and the people of the Swiss Confederation on their decision to join the United Nations. They have long given very distinguished support to the institutions of world peace, and it will be good to work with them here.

At the same time, I would like to welcome the coming membership of our neighbour, the Democratic Republic of East Timor. In doing so I would like to thank all the members of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor. We are very grateful for their fine work there. I assure you that we will be doing our best to consolidate those United Nations efforts for peace in our region. It has been a pleasure working with President Gusmão and his new Government. As they plan their future development, we look forward to continuing this work, not only bilaterally as friends and neighbours, but also through the long-standing process of consultation and cooperation we have established within our regional association.

I mention this aspect of our regional work for a specific reason. It is the main point I wish to make at this time. The process I refer to has been at the heart of the work of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) since its founding well over 30 years ago. It is not confined to our neighbours in South-East Asia. It also involves dialogue partners from all over the world as well as all the permanent members of the Security Council. It now covers the whole spectrum of cooperation: political, economic, functional and, since the end of the cold war, all aspects of security cooperation. In other words, it is a comprehensive approach to modern regional and international affairs. It comprises many layers of cooperation bound together by one institution, the United Nations. An enormous amount of work has gone into it. That is why we place equally enormous value on it. We believe it offers a secure way forward for every citizen we represent.

I make this point for reasons that deeply concern every one of our colleagues here. In the past year we have been made brutally aware of one terrible fact. The whole process of consultation and cooperation is now threatened. The opportunities it presents to our people are profoundly at risk. Like our fellow Members of this Organization, we have had to accept a grim reality. There is a dark side to the international life we share today: to globalization, to development, to progress, to knowledge and even to the beliefs we cherish, whether they be religious, political or social.

We have been taken to this dark side. It is a pitiless, bleak and miserable landscape. There is no path through it along which nation-States can safely proceed. It is, in that sense, a terrifying vision. In South-East Asia we have responded to it as such. We have deeply mourned the innocent victims of terrorism in America, Africa, Europe and Asia. We have condemned all who took those lives.

We are, however, trying to move beyond condemnation. We have taken many immediate and practical short-term measures. We have committed ourselves to long-term action. We have had to do this. Without security and stability, there is little chance for us to implement the far-reaching programme of development we have set for ourselves. So, in no way can we permit those who engage in any form of terrorism to succeed.

By this, I mean any group that tries to drag our affairs across to their dark side: not just extremists, no matter what cause they claim to represent, but also those who seek to corrupt international systems of trade, commerce, and banking or who wilfully destroy our environment or who trade in human misery. They stand in the way of the deepest interests of the people we represent here, the people for whom the United Nations is the direct opposite of the dark vision of the terrorist. It offers them a totally different side of world affairs: one that rejoices in the diversity of peoples, cultures and beliefs; one that at all times seeks the consensus that comes out of dialogue and negotiation; and one where informed direction is given to the great changes that are sweeping through all societies — in other words, the bright side of international affairs lit by a beacon of hope. That is how we see this Organization.

We want our regional efforts to help fuel this beacon. We want them to complement the work of the United Nations.

So, put simply, we see only one permanent agenda item here: How can the world body give hope and purpose to the lives of every family in every community in each of its 190 Member nations?

That is why we strongly support the efforts being made by the Secretary-General to express our purpose in that way, not in the language of confrontation that was heard throughout the last century or in the appalling vocabulary of terrorism, but in the human terms offered at the Millennium Summit.

In short, our hopes include an end to historical injustices, especially those which our brothers in Palestine continue to suffer, and a determined effort to help communities earn a good living in a responsible manner. Those were the basic hopes I believe we all had at the turn of the century. We do not wish to see them set aside. So we appeal to all our fellow Members to make sure they are not forgotten. We urge everyone to use the mechanisms we have here to that end.

Whenever there are grave threats to international peace, we are confident that the members of the Security Council will guide us well. We acknowledge the vital role they have in ensuring that international principles are upheld by every Member. In this, they have our full support, and we will contribute to their work in whatever way we can.

But the Council is still only one part of the work of the United Nations. There are many other tasks; above all, the peaceful work that binds all our layers of cooperation together.

We do not wish to see the Organization's attention directed solely towards the dark side of international life. Building a secure framework for international cooperation involves a long, consistent and comprehensive process. Like any process, it has to be constantly refined. We accept this. We do not feel, however, that the events of the past year mean that it has to be abandoned and redesigned. In saying this, I believe we share the deepest hopes of all developing nations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Eduard Kukan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia.

Mr. Kukan (Slovakia): Let me begin, Mr. President, by congratulating you on your well-deserved election. It is a great pleasure to see you, my good friend and colleague, preside over the proceedings of the General Assembly at this session. My delegation is ready to provide its full support to you. Let me also express my gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his dedication and accomplishment.

Slovakia welcomes Switzerland as the newest Member of our Organization. We look forward also to welcoming East Timor and to working closely with both of them in promoting peace, security and prosperity throughout the world.

The terrorist attacks on the United States a year ago evoked worldwide anguish and outrage, followed by enormous solidarity among nations throughout the world and a firm stand by the worldwide coalition against the scourge of terror. At the end of the day, those cowardly acts of terror did not reach their ultimate goal: chaos, anarchy and the destruction of the world community. On the contrary, they strengthened our resolution to seek world peace and security and to promote life in dignity and prosperity for all. Slovakia

pledged its full support for the anti-terrorist coalition from the very beginning.

As the ruins of the World Trade Center were smouldering at the southern tip of Manhattan, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretary-General acted quickly, resolutely and collectively. The United Nations proved to be crucial in the fight against terrorism, which should be maintained as a global campaign. Organizing this global task must be central to our efforts at the United Nations. We acknowledge the role of the United Nations in trying to raise the capacity of every Member to defeat terrorism in a globally coordinated way and in conformity with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which was adopted unanimously by the Council last year.

Since 11 September 2001, the Slovak authorities have adapted and strengthened domestic legislation so that it can be applied effectively against acts of terrorism. Slovakia deposited its instrument of ratification to the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism earlier this month, and has thus become party to all 12 international conventions and protocols against terrorism. Their provisions are already incorporated in our domestic legislation. We are committed to continue our cooperation in these endeavours with the relevant United Nations institutions.

Shortly following 11 September 2001, the Al Qaeda network and the Taliban regime that harboured those terrorists were fought and disrupted. Organizing a global response to the political and humanitarian crises in Afghanistan became one of the crucial tasks at the United Nations. A chance for the people of Afghanistan to start rebuilding their country, which had been fragmented for so long, has been offered. We commend the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the countries contributing to the International Security Assistance Force. Slovakia is actively engaged in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process in Afghanistan. An engineering unit from Slovakia was dispatched to take part in the Operation Enduring Freedom in August 2002.

Slovakia reaffirms its commitment to arms control, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We effectively participate in regional and global efforts in the field of disarmament and international security. The increased threat of international terrorism today gives rise to questions regarding the relationship between terrorism and disarmament, as well as the contributions that multilateral treaties and institutions in this field can make. We must make greater progress in achieving disarmament and non-proliferation goals, strengthen verification and implementation mechanisms, and thereby contribute to the creation of a safer world in which terrorism cannot breed and flourish. We will continue to work cooperatively and constructively in the pursuit of disarmament and arms limitation goals.

Over the last decade we have witnessed an upsurge in ethnic, social and religious violence all over the world, when simmering tensions and power struggles boiled over into open conflicts. There has been an increasing demand for the United Nations to intervene with regard to those threats to international peace and security. As a result, peacekeeping has become more frequent and more complex. Modern peacekeeping operations are multidimensional, with tasks ranging from traditional deployment of military personnel, demining and medical support, to verification, disarmament, the rebuilding of infrastructure and the facilitation of institution-building, democratization and elections. Peacekeeping operations have changed also in terms of the financial resources they require.

My Government has always been fully committed to the maintenance of international peace and security. Peacekeeping has always been an important aspect of our involvement in United Nations activities. Slovakia currently provides military personnel and observers for seven United Nations peacekeeping missions, in Ethiopia and Eritrea, in Cyprus, in Iraq, in Jerusalem, on the Golan Heights, in Sierra Leone and in East Timor. The number of Slovak military personnel serving under the United Nations flag has steadily increased since the mid-1990s. Currently, there are more than 600 troops, apart from the Slovak soldiers participating in missions in the Balkans under NATO leadership. Slovakia will remain actively engaged in this crucial area of the United Nations responsibilities in the future.

Let me pay tribute to those courageous men and women from various nations who contributed to the peace missions and who lost their lives while serving under the United Nations flag. My country has also suffered the loss of lives. Four brave Slovak men have been awarded, in memoriam, the Dag Hammarskjöld medal.

Resolutions adopted by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter are

legally binding. The failure of any Member State to fulfil the requirements of those resolutions constitutes a breach of the Charter. In such cases, the international community has the right to enforce the rule of law. We have carefully noted the decision of the Government of Iraq, announced earlier this week, to allow the return of United Nations weapons inspectors without conditions. Yet that decision needs to be matched with further concrete steps which would provide for the swift and full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The question of Israel and Palestine has been occupying our attention since the United Nations was founded. It is our common responsibility to achieve a comprehensive solution resulting in the existence of two States living side by side in peace and mutual respect within secure and recognized borders. We fully support the efforts of the diplomatic Quartet on the Middle East to push forward the vision of peace in the region.

Slovakia is fully committed to the rules and principles of international law and justice. In that context, we attach particular importance to the work of the International Court of Justice. The Court has proved to be a very useful institution for resolving inter-State disputes, including some serious territorial disputes. That institution deserves full support, including financial support, from the General Assembly. Slovakia and its southern neighbour have previously submitted a dispute to the Court. Now, having already recognized the Court's jurisdiction over a number of European countries, we are in the process of preparing a declaration that will recognize the general compulsory jurisdiction of the Court, in accordance with article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute.

We remain convinced that, as the main repository of international law, the United Nations must play an important role in strengthening legal approaches to fighting the most serious crimes of international concern. Slovakia fully supports the work of international criminal tribunals, as well as the establishment of the International Criminal Court. We have signed and ratified the Rome Statute of the Court. Slovakia became one of the countries whose ratification was necessary for the entry into force of the Statute on 1 July 2002. Despite various concerns and reservations expressed by some Member States of the United Nations, we continue to believe that the Court has the potential to promote the rule of law and to prevent impunity by persons who commit the most serious of crimes.

Our position on the issue of Security Council reform is linked to the importance we attach to making the Organization more effective. Let me once again underline this position. In addition to maintaining its necessary representative character, the Security Council should also preserve the required operational flexibility. Slovakia supports the enlargement of the Security Council in both the non-permanent as well as the permanent category. We consider it fully justified for one additional non-permanent seat to be allocated to the Group of Eastern European States, as that Group's membership has doubled in the last decade.

As the world becomes more and more global, the United Nations should respond by becoming ever more universal. The concerns of all nations should be listened to irrespective of their size, geographic location, military strength or economic power. We have no doubts as to the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in tackling global issues, whether with regard to the protection of human rights, the eradication of famine, poverty, disease and illiteracy or prevention of the proliferation of drugs and weapons.

We all live on one planet. We must all face the deterioration of the environment and together adopt adequate measures to guarantee sustainable development. The Millennium Declaration shows us the right way. The world community must now increase its efforts to meet all of these goals. The Monterrey and Johannesburg summits proved that much can be achieved if decisions are based on global consensus. They also showed the power of having the will and determination to tackle global issues. We now have to concentrate on the fulfilment of our commitments. We need deeds. The United Nations should play a leading role in monitoring the implementation of our decisions. We need a United Nations that is strong and efficient.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hugo Tolentino Dipp, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Tolentino Dipp (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to extend our congratulations to Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to lead the work of the General Assembly. We are confident that his leadership will bring greater honour to the United Nations, to his country and to himself. We would also like to congratulate his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his excellent work during the previous session.

We would also like to express our solidarity with Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his defence of the will of the many in the face of any event that places world peace at risk.

We also wish to welcome the Swiss Confederation and East Timor as they take their places in the Organization.

On behalf of the people and the Government of the Dominican Republic, I would like once again to reiterate the profound faith that the Dominican people have in the principles on which the universal mission of the United Nations is based. The ideas and ambitions that sparked the Second World War brought humanity close to losing all hope for peaceful co-existence. Political fanaticism, intransigent nationalism and all sorts of prejudices cast their shadow over leaders and over a great part of the world, leading to an ominous undertaking whose ideological manifestation greatly endangered the freedom and cultural diversity of humankind.

Luckily for all, reason prevailed. In order to make that victory a lasting one, and in order to ensure that humankind would maintain a steady and clear path towards peace, the nations who fought for freedom recognized the need to create a body to watch over the values that would improve international behaviour. These were the reasons for both the emergence of the United Nations and for enshrining in the Charter the objectives of peace, justice, the rejection of aggression and the resolution of controversies through peaceful means and in accordance with international law.

In other words, it was very clearly set out that the Organization would seek to use every peaceful means to resolve conflicts between peoples or States. It was also clearly specified that the use of force to maintain or restore peace and international security had to be the result of a unanimous decision of the permanent members of the Security Council. Over five decades have passed since the establishment of the Organization, and the events and changes experienced by the world in that time have been innumerable.

Many bloody conflicts in the Middle East, Asia and Africa have challenged the authority of the United Nations. Many unilateral actions have violated the Organization's legal system and threatened the balance of the world. Nevertheless, despite every provocation and all the instances of non-compliance with the resolutions of its highest bodies, the Organization has clearly made its mark by asserting the need to respect the international norms and laws governing the behaviour of its members. Peace, and even the survival of mankind itself, owe a great deal to the achievements of the United Nations.

Unfortunately, threats to universal peace continue to cast their shadow over the world today. The date of 11 September 2001 is an alarming example of the scope and capability of the enemies of peace. We will never be able to forget the perversity of those actions, their criminal character or the affront they tried to inflict upon this great nation. We understand perfectly well that, in the face of an aggression of this nature, the spontaneous reaction may be that of claiming legitimate self-defence. However, we should agree that such a response has moral limitations and conditions embodied in the principles that rule the rights of people and in those that form the bedrock of this Organization.

The Dominican Government has been signing all resolutions, agreements and conventions against terrorism. The Dominican Government has supported Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which created the Counter-Terrorism Committee, and is promoting the work to draft a comprehensive convention against international terrorism. However, our purpose in fighting this scourge and our solidarity with the nations that have been and are its victims must be focused, beyond any contingency, on the eradication of the causes that stimulate and provoke the depravation of the human condition that is expressed in acts of terror.

With regard to the right to confront terrorism directly, we must be aware that unilateral action represents a defeat of our capacity to reach agreements. It is only logical that it is our responsibility to do so with all the authority that this Organization grants through its multilateral nature. This is true because the use of force can be justified only when all means under the Charter of United Nations available to the General Assembly and the Security Council to assess the existence of a real threat to world peace have been exhausted.

In his report of 13 April 1998 concerning the issue of peace in Africa, the Secretary-General set forth ideas which must serve as a guide on the Iraqi situation. Among other ideas, Kofi Annan stated:

> "For the United Nations there is no higher goal, no deeper commitment and no greater ambition than preventing armed conflict. The prevention of conflict begins and ends with the

promotion of human security and human development." (*A/52/871, para. 2*)

It is obvious that we are not the only ones to think that, in the face of market globalization processes, cultural exchanges, technologies and communications, it has become imperative to resume on the path laid down at the Millennium Summit in order to correct the imbalances and to halt the growing total marginalization of large sectors of the world population. Allow me to quote a paragraph from the Millennium Declaration as a reminder of our priorities:

> "We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed. We recognize that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face special difficulties in responding to this central challenge." (*resolution 55/2, para. 5*)

Moreover, the Millennium Summit prioritized issues such as poverty, illiteracy, illness, gender inequality and environmental depletion as causes that conspire decisively against peace and universal coexistence. These troubling situations beg the question: How much have we done at the national and international levels to eliminate the obstacles that hinder the growth of the developing countries?

Right from its assumption of power in August 2000, the Government of the Dominican Republic, headed by agronomist Hipólito Mejía, has taken a series of measures aimed at adapting legislation in both public and private institutions to the demands of the unavoidable globalization process. With respect to social reform, the Dominican Government has launched a programme to reduce poverty and has increased its support in the fight against illiteracy. The creation of ministries of women and the environment are also significant initiatives in view of the lack of attention from which these sectors of society traditionally suffered.

We know that other countries have made similar changes, but the truth of the matter is that, as a whole, global statistics leave little room for optimism when compared to those relating to the great majority of developing countries. Unfortunately, at the global level, we cannot say that developed countries have manifested any understanding of or solidarity towards these issues in positive terms. The opportunities offered by the developed countries for developing countries to participate in the globalization process through cooperation leading to harmonious, gradual and equitable adaptation leave much to be desired.

Within this sombre picture, the United Nations has to act decisively in favour of the development of nations unjustifiably constrained by protectionism and subsidies, which create barriers that hinder competition on equal terms and which, consequently, negate free trade.

Year after year, speaker after speaker, we speak in this solemn Hall about the mandate — also ratified at the Millennium Summit — to proceed with decisive reforms in the Security Council and the General Assembly. However, a sort of indifference or adverse purport postpones or paralyses the opportunity to actually undertake such reform. If the universal conscience is to enjoy genuine representation, the reform of such bodies is imperative. Thus, this Organization needs its multilateral role to become the true expression of the political composition acquired by the world over the past 57 years.

On behalf of the Dominican Government, we wish to express our satisfaction for the decision taken by the Organization of American States regarding Haiti. Indeed, through its resolution 822 of 4 September 2002, entitled "Support for strengthening democracy in Haiti", that regional organization decided to support the regularization of economic cooperation between the Haitian Government and international financial institutions. Following the instructions of the President of the Dominican Republic, we appeal to the conscience of the United Nations to proceed in the same manner and to extend its support in reaching those nations capable of generous cooperation with our sister nation.

I wish to take this opportunity to share the most recent decisions concerning the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, headquartered in the Dominican Republic, which is one of the few United Nations bodies located in a developing country and the only one working on women's research and training. On 19 December 2001, by resolution 56/125, the General Assembly decided to create a working group with the mandate to make recommendations on the future work of the Institute. That working group met eight times in July and August 2002.

The Dominican Republic is confident that this session of the General Assembly will accept the working group's recommendations and that the Institute will soon be able to continue to fulfil its mandate.

In conclusion, I must recall that, at the beginning of my statement, I reaffirmed the faith of the Dominican people and Government in the mission of the United Nations. This Organization is more necessary today than ever before, at a time when the world is shrinking and when we increasingly need more than one interlocutor to which we can turn when faced with issues that could provoke violence and war. In other words, today more than ever all nations aspire to having an Organization that, through its traditional mandate and its universal scope, can strike a balance among all States for the benefit of genuine democratic security.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Win Aung, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar.

Mr. Aung (Myanmar): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his assumption of the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I am confident that his diplomatic skill and expertise will bring us to a successful outcome. I would also like to express our gratitude and appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his leadership and valuable contribution during the previous session.

May I also use this occasion to warmly welcome Switzerland as a new Member of the United Nations, and East Timor, which is soon to become a Member. I am confident that the work of the Organization will be enriched by the addition of those two new Members. The increasing membership of the United Nations truly reflects the fact that States are placing greater trust in the relevancy and the work of the Organization.

We live in challenging and dangerous times. Conflicts in various regions threaten global peace and security. The danger posed by terrorism has become a global phenomenon. Millions of people the world over remain mired in the vicious circle of ignorance, poverty and disease. The United Nations plays an indispensable role in our collective endeavour to overcome those daunting challenges.

The Charter of the United Nations provides us with the bedrock principles for maintaining peace and security. Those principles — sovereignty, territorial integrity and the non-threat or use of force — contribute to multilateralism and have deterred global conflagration for nearly six decades. Those principles must remain inviolate if we are to meet the daunting challenges that confront us. Only through multilateral action can we hope to overcome those challenges. Myanmar strongly believes in the United Nations and the multilateralism it represents as the best guarantee of global peace and security. We therefore share the view of the Secretary-General, who has said that "All States have a clear interest, as well as a clear responsibility, to uphold international law and maintain international order" (*A/57/PV.2*).

Terrorism poses a threat to all of mankind. Only through our collective endeavour can we hope to overcome that menace. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), we have taken necessary actions to combat terrorism. Myanmar was also among the first countries to report to the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee on their actions against terrorism. It promulgated an anti-money-laundering law in June with firm provisions to help suppress terrorism. Myanmar has submitted to the Committee a second report, together with relevant documents, reflecting the legislative and executive measures that we have taken to give effect to the resolution. Here I wish to reiterate that Myanmar is against terrorism in all forms and manifestations and that it will extend full cooperation to the international community to fight that menace.

It is in our power to make the world a better place — a world of peace, a world of prosperity and a world free of conflict. To do that, we must do away with hatred. We face numerous challenges today. We must work together in a cooperative spirit to overcome the dangers and meet the challenges that confront us, be they imposed by nature or induced by man.

Throughout the ages the world has experienced many natural catastrophes and calamities, including those resulting in the extinction of dominant species. But the greatest danger we face today is not from nature, but is caused by man.

It is therefore not only pertinent, but also vital, to recall that the teachings of Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ and the prophet Mohammed all emphasize love and compassion as the guiding light to bring hope to all mankind. If we want a better future for mankind, we must take to our hearts the teachings of those great religions. We should let love and compassion guide us.

Only by doing that can we overcome our evil instincts such as hatred, anger and the desire for revenge. We must all do away with animosity, jealousy, excessive pride and self-centred behaviour.

Many tragedies today, including the tragic events of 11 September, have their roots in hatred, animosity and violence. It is those negative forces that we must address and overcome. Violence cannot be overcome with greater violence. That would only drive the world towards a vicious circle of increasing conflagrations and calamities. Only a reign of love and compassion can put out the raging fire of hatred and violence. It is not in hatred, but rather in love and compassion, that our future lies. Through the peaceful settlement of disputes we can find greater security for us all.

The United Nations and the principles it enshrines is best placed to guide us to that path. The United Nations is the light that can guide us to the path of love, tolerance, compassion and caring. The United Nations was born out of our desire to live together in peace with one another as good citizens of the Earth. It should not be used as a vehicle for inciting hatred.

We live in an age of unprecedented prosperity, but that prosperity is not shared by all. While some nations enjoy very high standards of living, the majority remains in poverty. The poor countries, either because of resource constraints or a lack of capital and technology, or because of conflicts, cannot hope to attain development without international cooperation. Because of their innate weakness and an unfavourable international economic environment, they will, if unassisted, remain forever mired in poverty. Poverty breeds discontent and despair — ingredients that could lead to a vicious circle of conflicts and violence.

In Myanmar, which was subjected to untold sufferings as a result of insurgencies for more than four decades, we are now actively promoting an end to conflict and bloodshed. We are also striving to eradicate poverty. We are building a modern and developed nation where peace, prosperity, justice and democracy flourish. That is a process that has achieved significant progress. It is our fervent hope that our endeavours towards that end will be helped, not hindered, and that our efforts to attain national unity and our efforts at nation-building will be met with understanding and encouragement.

Because of historical legacies, we still find ourselves having to address the issue of national unity. We are building a nation where all our 135 national races can regard one another as brothers, a nation where there is equality and justice, a nation that will bring prosperity to all. Those are the ideals that motivate us; those are the goals that we are determined to achieve.

It is the goal of our Government to bring to reality the aspirations of the people of Myanmar to a multiparty democratic political system. To that end, we are laying firm foundations so that such a democratic system will have the strength to withstand any challenges that arise. We are firmly convinced that only through those strong foundations can we ensure a brighter future for our nation. That is a conviction born of our bitter experiences — experiences of 14 years under parliamentary democracy and 26 years of socialism.

In this nation-building process, we place special importance on poverty eradication, particularly in rural and far-flung areas. In the border areas where the members of most of our ethnic nationalities reside, we are implementing a programme of all-around development. We have established 24 development zones towards that end. I should like to reiterate that our relentless efforts in the nation-building process are motivated by our desire to bring prosperity to all our national brethren. We are laying the groundwork so that successive Governments, which will emerge under the new Constitution, will not have difficulty in overcoming future challenges. That is a task that we are endeavouring to accomplish with might and main. Understanding, cooperation and encouragement by the international community will hasten the process of achieving our cherished goal. Ostracism and political pressure will surely not help, but will rather hinder, our progress on the path to our cherished goal of democracy. However numerous the obstacles, whether we are helped or hindered, we remain resolute in our determination, for the goal we seek is in fulfilment of the aspirations of our people: it is our noble destiny.

Cooperation with the United Nations is the cornerstone of Myanmar's foreign policy. Let me take this opportunity to apprise the Assembly of the continued cooperation that Myanmar has extended to the United Nations. We received Mr. Razali Ismail, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for the eighth time in July 2002. We provided all possible cooperation in the accomplishment of his mission. Likewise, Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, was accorded full and unhindered cooperation during his visits to Myanmar.

I would also like to share with the Assembly the headway we have made in combating the scourge of narcotic drugs. The elimination of narcotic drugs was designated as a national duty in 1988, and since then efforts have been redoubled to meet that challenge. A 15-year narcotics elimination plan has been formulated and is in its fourth year of implementation. The plan is showing results. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the International Narcotics Control Board have acknowledged that poppy cultivation in the country has fallen from more than 90,000 acres in 1999-2000 to a little more than 62,000 acres in 2001-2002.

As part of our concerted effort, the New Destiny project was launched earlier this year in the regions where poppy cultivation is concentrated. The main objective of the plan is to educate poppy farmers, to distribute substitute seeds, to provide financial assistance and to enhance law enforcement. As a result, more than 290 tons of poppy seeds and dried poppy bulbs have been voluntarily surrendered. The surrendered poppy seeds and bulbs were burned in the presence of diplomats and of the international press. That alone has prevented a potential yield of 55 tons of heroin with an estimated street value of more than $2.2 billion. In addition, $1.1 billion worth of various narcotic drugs seized in the country was publicly destroyed in June in Yangon. Moreover, 26,000 acres of poppy fields were destroyed in 2000-2001 alone. Effective legal action has also been taken against drug traffickers. As a country deeply committed to addressing the problem of narcotic drugs, Myanmar also looks forward to contributing to that cause in the international arena.

We live in an increasingly integrated world. In this age of globalization, a new partnership between developed and developing countries is needed more than ever before. The Millennium Declaration spelled out targets for developmental cooperation. The Monterrey Consensus outlined actions to be implemented in key financial sectors pertaining to development. The World Summit on Sustainable Development resulted in some progress and in important commitments. Their early implementation will lead to a more equal distribution of benefits in this rapidly globalizing world. It will also enable us to pass on to future generations a world that is economically sustainable and environmentally sound. Myanmar stands ready to work with the rest of the family of nations to attain those goals — goals to which we all pledged ourselves in the historic Millennium Declaration.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hidipo Hamutenya, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia.

Mr. Hamutenya (Namibia): I convey warm congratulations to Mr. Jan Kavan on his unanimous election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I am confident that, given his vast experience and diplomatic skills, he will be able to steer this session to a successful conclusion. In the same vein, our congratulations and sincere appreciation go to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for the outstanding manner in which he conducted the work of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I wish also to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the illustrious son of Africa at the helm of the Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has taken the United Nations to greater heights.

We join other members of our family of nations in welcoming the Swiss Confederation as the one hundred and ninetieth Member of the United Nations. We are confident that its membership will not only formalize that resourceful country's long involvement with the United Nations but contribute greatly to the work of the Organization.

After a long and bitter liberation struggle, the people of East Timor have finally realized their right to self-determination and independence. We look forward to welcoming the Democratic Republic of East Timor as the one hundred and ninety first Member of the United Nations. Just as the international community stood by the people of East Timor in their darkest hour of need, the United Nations must now assist them in their efforts to rebuild their country.

The opening of this session of the General Assembly coincided with the first anniversary of the 11 September terrorist attack on the United States of America. That horrific attack met with vigorous international condemnation and led to a concerted campaign by countries throughout the world to eradicate terrorism as a global scourge. All around the world, countries, including my own, are continuing to take domestic measures to combat international terrorism.

Last week the general debate in this hall was overshadowed by an ominous and terrifying cloud — the threat of war in Iraq. Indeed, most of us have been

filled with grave concern about that looming danger. That concern has, however, been somewhat eased. The focus now seems to have moved away from the temptation to take unilateral military action towards the multilateralism that is so vital for the maintenance of world peace and security. In this regard, Namibia welcomes the decision by Iraq to cooperate with the Security Council.

Namibia is deeply concerned about the constantly escalating violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The continuous wanton destruction of Palestinian towns, the demolition of homes and institutions and, above all, the unabating loss of life are all manifestations of the tragic plight of the Palestinian people. While rejecting all acts of violence against innocent civilians, we recognize the urgent need for the international community to address the root cause of violence, namely, the continued occupation of Palestinian territory by Israeli troops.

It is imperative for the international community to act decisively and with a renewed sense of urgency to stop the ongoing carnage and destruction in the Middle East. We support the immediate establishment of an independent Palestinian State, existing side by side with Israel in peace and mutual security.

One of the factors which have militated against development and progress in Africa has been the armed conflicts in a number of countries on that continent. Such conflicts have been responsible for the aggravation of poverty and the spread of disease.

It is pleasing to note, however, that peace and security in Africa have been increasing over the past year or so. Developments in Angola since February this year have filled us with hope and a sense of relief. After more than two decades of destructive war, Angola is firmly and irreversibly on the road to peace. Concerted efforts by the international community are, however, required to address the urgent and burning humanitarian needs and to help Angola to maintain and consolidate its hard-won peace.

There have been similar positive developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The ceasefire there has been holding. However, the aggressor countries have still not withdrawn their troops from that country in line with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, the Pretoria Agreement and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The United Nations has confirmed, through various reports, that there continue to be large-scale violations of human rights in the eastern part of that country. This is unacceptable and should not be allowed to continue with impunity. Similarly, the plundering of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should no longer be condoned.

Furthermore, in Sierra Leone the machine guns, with their staccato sound, have fallen silent, thanks to the intervention of the international community in the conflict in that country. Successful elections were held there this year, and the people of that country are now busy with peace-building and the reconstruction of their country. We call on the international community to assist them in this regard.

In 1992, the General Assembly decided in favour of a referendum in Western Sahara. Ten years later, the people of Western Sahara continue to endure suffering, waiting and hoping for the implementation of the United Nations plan for the independence of their country. The only hope they have is our Organization. We, the Members of the United Nations, therefore have a responsibility towards the people of Western Sahara in their quest for self-determination. It is not a question of our doing them a favour. Rather, we have an obligation under the Charter of our Organization.

It is high time that the people of Western Sahara exercise their right to self-determination and independence through a free and fair referendum under the supervision of the United Nations. The Secretary-General should therefore continue to seek the implementation of the United Nations independence plan for Western Sahara.

The unilateral economic blockade against Cuba is continuing to cause immense suffering to the people of Cuba, who suffered with us and shared with us selflessly, extending solidarity to our people during our difficult struggle for independence. We reiterate our call for the lifting of this embargo.

Just as the people of Africa have begun, in earnest, to address the problem of armed conflict that has hindered Africa's development and socio-economic progress in the past, the continent must now grapple with yet another menace that is ravaging its population, namely, the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Its devastating impact is now undermining economic growth and development in sub-Saharan Africa, with millions already infected and dying. Indeed, sub-Saharan Africa

is now facing a human crisis of monumental proportions. Millions of AIDS orphans are screaming out for help as a result of this rampaging disease.

We appeal for increased and generous contributions to the Global Health Fund to enable us to fight the scourge. In that connection, we would like to emphasize that the allocation of the available funds should be determined by the magnitude of the problem in each country.

As part of our ongoing effort to fight the scourge of HIV/AIDS, Namibia will be hosting the Second Regional Conference on Orphans and Vulnerable Children from 25 to 29 November, 2002. It is our sincere hope that the Conference will further highlight the fate of those children and galvanize the world's further support to ease their truly difficult plight. We are quite confident that the support of the international community will enable us, indeed, humanity, and Africa in particular, to conquer this ravaging pandemic.

The drought situation in Southern Africa places more than 12 million people at risk of hunger and destitution. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General in that respect. We also welcome the efforts of the donor community in mobilizing resources for relief. Our sincere thanks and appreciation also go to all the humanitarian agencies providing support. We encourage them to continue to mobilize and to render further support.

The fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly has special significance for Africa, in the sense that considerable attention is being paid to the continent's problems. In the first instance, there is the tabling by the Secretary-General of the report on the final review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. This session also marks the end of the United Nations Programme for the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa. The conclusions of the review are sobering in the sense that both the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the Programme for the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa have come to an end, but Africa remains marginalized in the global economy.

Also significant for Africa at this session is the fact that notwithstanding the continent's rather minimal development performance during the periods just referred to, Africa has come to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly more determined then ever to launch itself on a new path of economic growth and development.

It was in the light of this determination that on Monday, 16 September 2002 the General Assembly devoted the whole day to exploring ways in which the international community can support the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), designed to rebuild and rejuvenate our continent. What emerged from the Monday meeting on Africa was a clear sense of purpose and direction such that, while hoping for greater support from the international community to implement its new development initiative, Africa is seriously seeking to lift itself up by its own bootstraps.

Indeed, the African leaders have reaffirmed their commitment to the development goals of the United Nations Millennium Summit Declaration for the continent to achieve economic growth of 7 per cent by the year 2015 and thus to be able to halve poverty on the continent by that same year.

And while NEPAD is an African initiative, owned and managed by the African Union, the continent still needs unfettered market access for its goods, increased foreign investment, the elimination of external debts and, yes, more Official Development Assistance, as well as a large infusion of technology and skills into its production processes.

In conclusion, I would like to state Namibia's position on the International Criminal Court (ICC). A few individuals who commit heinous crimes against humanity undermine international peace and security. When those who commit serious crimes go unpunished, murder and torture carry no risk. Rather, they encourage even more crimes. The entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on 1 July 2002 represents a historic day for international justice.

As a State Party to the ICC, Namibia has noted with great concern the adoption of Security Council resolution 1422 (2002) under chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, as if the ICC were a threat to peace or an act of aggression. In this context, we call upon those States that are not Parties to the Statute to become so now.

In the face of a growing tendency towards unilateralism, the revitalization of the General Assembly, which is the collective decision-making body, is becoming even more important. In the same

vein, Namibia reaffirms its position on the need to reform and democratize the United Nations Security Council in order to ensure that the Council remains responsible for the peace and security of all countries in all regions.

From this very rostrum, it has been said time and again that if the United Nations did not exist, it would have to be created. Those are not empty words. Rather, they express the deep aspirations and commitment of humanity to the Organization, which has stood the test of time and proven indispensable to the conduct of relations among States. Let us not allow multilateralism to be eroded.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Habib Ben Yahia, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia.

Mr. Ben Yahia (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly and to wish him every success in discharging his functions. Because of the profound friendship that exists between Tunisia and the Czech Republic, we assure him of our cooperation and support as he conducts the business of this session. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, who conducted the last session's work so ably and effectively.

It gives me pleasure to express our appreciation and gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who is constantly playing a constructive and effective role in the service of the noble goals of our Organization.

I would like to extend Tunisia's congratulations to the Swiss Confederation on its admission to membership in the United Nations.

The various repercussions of the events of 11 September last, that we have all vigorously condemned, continue to be felt and to remind the members of the international community that strengthening our common action is essential for meeting the security and development challenges confronting our world today. These challenges must be dealt with through increased discussion, cooperation and solidarity, on the basis of a global, integrated vision of the future. The establishment of a link between security and development, as well as a delicate understanding of the dialectic that exists between these two elements, make it possible not only to find an effective solution to certain international problems but also to prevent their occurring.

The global vision that we advocate as a *modus operandi* at the international level is basically built on strengthened values of understanding and interaction among religions, civilizations and cultures, on enshrining the principles of solidarity, moderation and tolerance, on poverty eradication, combating exclusion and marginalization; a vision that requires a collective stand against fanaticism and terrorism.

These principles and values are based on the civilizational plan that His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has constantly advocated during this new era in Tunisian society. This plan was strengthened following the essential constitutional reform, which was unanimously adopted for the people of Tunisia during a referendum and during which the people opted for a Republic of tomorrow, based on the rule of law and institutions, the protection of human rights and solidarity among members of our society.

The successes and achievements gained in our country, thanks to this integrated global approach that we have adopted to redress the social, economic, political and cultural situation of the Tunisian people, have strengthened our conviction that international relations must be based on the same approach for the well-being of humanity at large and for meeting the challenges we are facing today.

Tunisia has on a number of occasions submitted several initiatives, in particular the appeal made in 1989 from this rostrum by His Excellency Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic, for a universal covenant of peace and progress, laying down the foundation of a better future for the international community in a spirit of constructive cooperation, immune to conflicts and to wastage of resources and energy.

Tunisia believes that it is time to hold an international conference to draft common denominators that would provide a basis for a code of conduct to be observed by all parties. This code would help to initiate a responsible dialogue that would avoid any double standards and would attenuate any feelings of deprivation or oppression felt by many peoples. We believe that the United Nations would be the ideal forum to develop and sponsor this kind of dialogue among States.

The President returned to the Chair.

One year after the painful events that shook the United States, the danger of terrorism is still felt, and it continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. We therefore have to demonstrate constant resolve in the face of this phenomenon in our attempts to eradicate it once and for all. Now that the most obvious manifestations of terrorism have been dealt with, the international community must tackle its causes which are linked to security, development and culture.

Tunisia was one of the first countries to warn about the dangers of terrorism, well before the events of 11 September. At the beginning of the 1990s, we were in favour of coordinated, international efforts to deal with, contain and eliminate this scourge. It is disquieting that certain terrorists are still present in many countries and enjoy protection under the pretext of granting them the right of political asylum, without any inquiry into their actions, their activities or the crimes that they committed against their countries of origin.

Many regions of the world still suffer the horrors of poverty and destitution. Only through a focused, careful approach to achieve the Millennium Goals, which were reaffirmed at several subsequent international conferences, will it be possible to resolve this situation. Tunisia had already adopted an initiative along these lines by proposing the creation of a world solidarity fund to combat poverty in the world. Two years after this initiative was put forward, and after its adoption by the General Assembly, and following the decision taken by the World Summit for Sustainable Development that discussed setting up this fund, we hope now that the research and studies conducted in this framework, particularly the latest report of the United Nations Secretary-General on modalities for the functioning of and the use of such a fund, will make it possible for the fund to come into being this year.

Poverty eradication is a crucial element in guaranteeing the stability of societies and preventing other scourges, such as wars, terrorism and diseases, particularly since this is basic to any global strategy that guarantees international peace and security.

Africa continues to suffer from conflicts and from economic and development problems and requires constant attention from the international community. Many analyses have proven that the instability of the continent is basically due to Africa's economic and social problems. Many international meetings and summits have also confirmed this. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is an initiative that might draw the attention of donor States and the attention of international financial institutions to this situation.

We believe that if the international community wants Africa to have a bright future, it cannot continue to disregard its basic needs or subject it to mere geostrategic considerations, or, indeed, tie international aid to harsh conditions that many African States cannot fulfil.

The international community must now play a prominent role in prevailing upon Israel to halt its aggression against the Palestinian people, withdraw from the occupied territories and abide by international law on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions, as well as on the basis of the principle of "land for peace".

The Palestinian people need the unflagging support of the international community so that it can recover its legitimate rights, primarily its right to create a State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Israel's policy of assassinating Palestinian leaders, of maintaining a blockade against the legitimate President Yasser Arafat, of starving civilians, and of massacring people and expelling them from their land in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention only worsens this situation and fans resentment and a desire for revenge.

The international community must redouble its efforts to bring about a return to the negotiating table in order to give real meaning to the vision of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side within secure recognized borders, as advocated by President Bush in his speech made in June 2002, and on the basis of the comprehensive approach advocated by the Arab plan adopted at the recent Arab Summit in Beirut.

Tunisia has always worked for peace in the Middle East. We have taken part in the multilateral negotiations and today are ready to continue our constructive role for the resumption of talks and the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace that will guarantee the liberation of Arab territories still occupied by Israel since 1967, including the Syrian Golan and the remainder of the Lebanese territory still under Israeli occupation.

Furthermore, lasting peace and stability for all the peoples of the Middle East requires continued

international efforts to make progress on the question of Iraq through peaceful means and by implementing relevant Security Council resolutions.

We believe that dialogue between the United Nations and Iraq remains the best way to resolve all outstanding Iraqi issues.

We welcome, in this regard, Iraq's decision to accept the return of the weapons inspectors without conditions. This is, as was noted by the Secretary-General at the beginning of our session, a step towards detente in the region and the lifting of sanctions.

Tunisia supports the Arab position that rejects attacks against any Arab country and any further suffering and harm to the brotherly Iraqi people. Our position also supports maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State of Kuwait, while stressing the need to avoid any destabilization of security there.

We wish to reaffirm the need to lift, once and for all, the sanctions against sisterly Libya, which has fulfilled all its commitments and has offered its full cooperation towards finding a just and satisfactory solution to the Lockerbie case.

The global vision of peace and security in the world is no less important at the regional level, which complements and supports joint international action.

Tunisia considers the Arab Maghreb Union as a strategic choice and we have continuously worked to consolidate it and to remove obstacles that have impeded its progress. We hope that joint Maghreb action will lead to greater integration among the countries of the Union.

On the regional level, Tunisia is working to deepen its relations of cooperation and partnership in the Euro-Mediterranean region. We welcome the reactivation of the "Five plus Five" forum, which will lead to greater opportunities to promote dialogue, cooperation and solidarity between the two shores of the Mediterranean and will strengthen elements of peace, stability, and development. In this manner, relations may develop among countries of this forum in a spirit of mutual respect, while preserving the interest of all parties.

Tunisia will work on this basis and do everything it can to guarantee the success of the "Five plus Five" summit, which we will be hosting in 2003.

The considerable technological advances witnessed today definitely have an impact on international economic recovery. Mindful of the importance of this issue, Tunisia was one of the first countries to call for the holding of a summit on information technology, an idea that was unanimously supported by all international parties. Tunisia will have the honour of hosting the World Summit on the Information Society in 2005. We hope that the General Assembly will continue to help prepare the groundwork in order to make it a success.

In this context, we would like to stress the need to facilitate the transfer of clean technology to developing countries and to promote means of cooperation among North-South and South-South countries, as well as to strengthen financial cooperation in order to provide additional funding to projects relating to environmental protection in the developing countries.

The subjects discussed in Johannesburg and the matters discussed at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, as well as the subjects dealt with in the WTO conference in Doha should complement one another. In the interest of all countries, particularly the developing countries, globalization must be made a factor for progress for everyone as well as a factor for strengthening peace and security.

Today's world promises new hopes and ambitions but also contains threats and challenges, the implications of which should be understood. Tunisia's message to this Assembly is that we should work together to draw up an act of international partnership in all fields based on an international code of conduct for all parties, in the political, economic, development, security and stability fields.

The principles that unite us in promoting the major priorities and preventing new dangers to international peace and security should impel us to adopt a preventive approach based, first, on respect for the principle of international law as the basis for peaceful coexistence; secondly, on providing equal opportunities for all developing countries without any exclusion or marginalization and thirdly, on resolving international problems, conflicts, crises or wars on the basis of established principles of justice and in keeping with international law.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Naji Sabri, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq.

Mr. Sabri (Iraq): Mr. President, I would like, at the outset, to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly and would like to express my appreciation of the United Nations Secretary-General's eloquent statement at the opening of this session, which gave good support to multilateralism and international relations and exposed the dangers of unilateralism and hegemony.

I also wish to congratulate the Swiss Confederation on its membership and East Timor on its prospective membership to the United Nations.

This session is held one year after the tragic events of 11 September 2001, and I would like to renew our condolences to the American people, especially the families of the victims of this tragedy, and express to them our deep sympathy.

It gives me pleasure to express my sincere gratitude to the States of the international community and to organizations for their substantive position rejecting the United States Administration's threats against Iraq and for the calls they made for a comprehensive political solution to the impasse in the relationship between Iraq and the Security Council.

In response to several appeals made by the United Nations Secretary-General, peace-loving States and regional organizations, my Government decided to allow the return of United Nations weapons inspectors without conditions as a first step towards a comprehensive solution that includes the lifting of sanctions imposed on Iraq and the timely implementation of other provisions of relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 687 (1991).

I was instructed by the President of the Republic of Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Saddam Hussein, to convey to you, in the allotted time, excerpts of a letter he has addressed to the General Assembly, in which His Excellency presents Iraq's position on the latest developments in the relationship between Iraq and the Security Council.

Following are excerpts from the letter:

> "In his speech at the General Assembly that was preceded and accompanied by noisy propaganda and extensive preparation, the United States President, instead of paying attention to common issues of concern to humanity at large, has presented the security problems of his own country and the sacrifices it has suffered since the events of September 11.
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> "It is a good sign that the United States resorted, for the first time since the end of the cold war, to the General Assembly to put forward one of its problems, after years of disregard of the weight, effect and opinion of others. Nevertheless, the United States President revealed his basic purpose when he jumped to the issue of Iraq without any introduction or acceptable progression. He portrayed that issue as if it were the most dangerous situation, not only for the life, security and future of the United States, but also for the life, future and security of the whole world. Among his generalizations, which included deliberate insinuations, he presented extreme distortions of the so-called nuclear, biological and chemical threats, so as to make American citizens believe the deliberate insinuation that Iraq was linked to the American people's tragedy of 11 September.
>
> "He seems to have assumed that the countries of the world are unaware of the American Administration and its methods, or of Iraq and its high sense of responsibility toward humanity, its desire for peace and stability, or of the fact that the Iraqis are a creative people in work, production, and innovation, in addition to being the heirs of the most ancient human civilizations.
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> "The United States President talked about the importance of the application of democracy on the part of the Government of Iraq. He pretended to care for the people of Iraq after he and other Presidents before him have killed Iraqis by using weapons such as depleted uranium, and by the blockade, which is now more than twelve years old, in which more than one million and seven hundred thousand innocent Iraqis, out of a population of twenty five million citizens, have died.
>
> "So, after utilizing the American propaganda machine for a long time and spouting official statements full of lies, distortion, and falsehood, the focus was basically turned on inciting the American public against Iraq and pushing it to believe the United States Administration's schemes of aggression as a fait accompli, as if it were the solution or the necessary rescue that would allow American citizens to live

in security and stability, after what they had gone through in the 11 September events.

"When the United States Administration realized that it was necessary to have an international cover for using force against Iraq and that the world did not believe the lies it tried to propagate to link Iraq to the September events, it changed the issue and began to shed crocodile tears about international law and the necessity to comply with the resolutions of international legitimacy, alleging that Iraq is not complying with Security Council resolutions, especially with regard to the United Nations inspectors. This implied that Iraq had the intention to develop, or that it already possesses, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. According to these allegations, it might give such weapons to terrorist organizations that pose a threat to world security.

"Now that Iraq has accepted the return of the United Nations inspectors, we will all be able to see how they work. In our past experience with these inspectors (1991-1998), Iraq used to ask the inspection teams to do their job in accordance with the declared goals of the Security Council. However, some of the inspectors went on doing intelligence and espionage work that had nothing to do with the official mandate of the inspection teams. Some of those inspectors have publicly admitted this; some, including an American, are still publicly talking about it. Even Mr. Rolf Ekeus, the former chief of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), has recently stated that the inspectors overstepped the limits of their defined duties by spying on the Iraqi leadership. I quote: 'The United States and other Powers exploited the inspection teams for their own political ends, including monitoring President Saddam Hussein's whereabouts.' He also said that the inspection teams deliberately created problems to prepare the ground for possible military attacks.

"Iraq has always defended the principles and values that you have willingly set down in the United Nations Charter and the purposes for which the Security Council was created, which are to preserve security and to establish peace. Therefore, by confronting evil for twelve years now, Iraq has not only been defending its own patriotism, but rather it has acted as if it were defending your own patriotism. It has been acting on your behalf without being assigned to do so. In targeting Iraq, the United States Administration is acting on behalf of Zionism, which has been killing the heroic people of Palestine, destroying their property, murdering their children, and seeking to impose their domination on the whole world, not only militarily, but also economically and politically.

"The United States Administration wants to destroy Iraq in order to control Middle East oil, and consequently control the politics as well as the oil and economic policies of the whole world. If it succeeds in that, God forbid, it would dictate for each country what it needs for its economic development, what quantities of oil it is allowed to buy, at what prices, along with other conditions.

"Briefly, what Iraq wants is the respect of the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, whether regarding its own interests and sovereignty or those of the other Member States of the United Nations. On this basis, Iraq was, and still is, ready to cooperate with the Security Council and international organizations. However, Iraq rejects anyone's transgression of its rights, sovereignty, security and independence. That would be in contradiction with the principles of the Charter and international law.

"Hence, Iraq has not rejected the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, even though those that relate to Iraq are unjust and at odds with the United Nations Charter and international law. Iraq rather calls on members of the Security Council, and on the United States Administration in particular, to respect their own obligations under the Charter, under international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Iraq demands that its inalienable rights, stipulated in those very resolutions, be met, including respect of its sovereignty and security, lifting the blockade imposed on it, and applying paragraph 14 of Resolution 687 (1991) to the Zionist entity, as stipulated in the text and in the same manner as it was applied to Iraq.

"I hereby declare before you that Iraq is totally clear of all nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. If there are anyone amongst

you who might still worry that the fabrications announced by American officials about Iraq may possibly be true, our country is ready to receive any scientific experts accompanied by politicians you choose to represent any one of your countries to tell us which places and scientific and industrial installations they would wish to see, particularly those about which the American officials have been fabricating false stories, alleging that they contain prohibited materials or activities. If such experts and politicians visit Iraq, we shall provide them with all the facilities they need to achieve their objective, that is, to see the true facts as they are.

"As what matters for us basically is that our rights, sovereignty and security be respected in accordance with international law, we have accepted the return of the inspection teams to Iraq, taking into consideration the arrangements that should safeguard these principles and achieve, with transparency, the goal of making sure that Iraq no longer possesses nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction. Along with you, we are waiting to see.

"The blockade imposed upon Iraq has been in place for more than 12 years now, during which time our assets and oil revenues have been frozen and we have been unable to use them except through an inefficient United Nations-run system that has already proven to be unfeasible. Substantial amounts of our revenues have been illegitimately seized in a manner tantamount to looting and contrary to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

"We therefore call for a discussion of the issue of the inspection teams in accordance with international law. That should be done on a comprehensive basis with a discussion of Iraq's obligations, including the issue of the inspection teams as well as the obligations of the Security Council towards Iraq, as stated in the resolutions themselves, particularly resolution 687 (1991). Reciprocal obligations exist of which the Security Council has implemented nothing, including the obligation to respect Iraq's sovereignty, which is being violated by America and Britain on a daily basis through their ongoing aggression and the artificially drawn parallel latitude lines over northern and southern Iraq.

"You may notice how the policy of the Zionist entity, which has usurped Palestine and other Arab territories since 1948, and afterwards, has now become as one with the policies and capabilities of the United States.

"The United States Administration has been making up problems with Iraq in order to derail the application of paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991) and to prevent the Security Council from lifting the blockade imposed on Iraq. The reason lies in the fact that the counter-obligations under relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including resolution 687 (1991) of 3 April 1991, contain a clear paragraph demanding that the Middle East be made a zone free from weapons of mass destruction. Thus the American Administration does not want to embarrass the Zionist entity or deprive it of the nuclear, chemical and biological weapons it actually possesses. It is also because the United States Administration is aware that Iraq has indeed honoured all its obligations and is demanding, along with other Arab countries, that paragraph 14 be applied to the Zionist entity.

"Iraq has been keen to see the inspection issue discussed between the Security Council and Iraq, through the United Nations Secretary-General and the representatives of Iraq, with a view to reaching a balanced formula based on the principles of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, and within a comprehensive solution which should bring to an end the cyclone of American accusations and fabricated crises against Iraq. At the same time, this would reassure Iraq with regard to its security, sovereignty, territorial integrity and its right to choose its own way without interference, in accordance with the rules established in the Charter of the United Nations.

"The United States President said in his speech that Iraq is providing financial support to the Palestinian people. My comment is that this is correct. Yet we feel that the support we have extended has not been as great as we would have hoped, because of the circumstances which have curtailed our means. In extending this support, we act in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the resolutions of the Assembly, in which the national struggle of peoples against occupation

and colonialism is considered to be an inalienable national right.

"But what grounds does America and its Presidents have to support the Zionist entity, which has been occupying Palestine and other Arab territories and committing its criminal policy of killing Palestinians, destroying their property and encroaching upon, and destroying, the holy places of Muslims and Christians there? What principles and what laws does the American President rely on in killing Iraqis, blockading their country, destroying their property and interfering in their internal affairs?"

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ernst Walch, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Walch (Liechtenstein): Let me first extend my congratulations and a warm welcome to Switzerland, a neighbouring country of Liechtenstein, on its membership in the United Nations. Switzerland has for centuries lived the ideals of the United Nations as a place where peoples of different ethnic backgrounds, languages, cultures and religions have peacefully lived together and have founded a nation based on democratic principles and the rule of law. Now its people have chosen to join the United Nations. We look forward to Switzerland's contribution, its expertise and experience in the challenging work of this Organization. Together with the admission of East Timor a few days from now, this brings the United Nations even closer to being what it was intended to be, a truly universal family of nations.

In the past year, the United Nations has again convened a number of meetings at the highest level, with the best intentions and the most ambitious agendas. Those included the special session on children, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. All these meetings have resulted in important outcomes, but they have sometimes fallen short of the expectations of those most directly affected. Bigger is not always better. We believe that the era of such world conferences and summits has come to a close. We have established good standards and must now focus on their implementation. The Millennium Development Goals must be given primary importance in this respect.

A few years ago, we had hoped to be entering an era of the primacy of the rule of law. Small States in particular rely on the rule of law, both at the national and at the international levels, where this Organization plays a particular role. Today, we are all challenged more than ever to uphold the principle of the rule of law. The events of 11 September made us realize that no person and no place is immune to the threat of international terrorism. The international community, and especially this Organization, responded vigorously. For weeks immediately after the attacks, countries were determined to join forces to oppose and eliminate the threat to all of us. Today provides a good opportunity not only to commemorate those who have died at the hands of international terrorists, but also to reassess our common response and responsibility as the international community.

In looking back, we realize today that the sense of working together we all felt was short-lived and that it has not extended to all areas. After the terrorist attacks there was recognition that international terrorism can only be fought successfully if all States and nations work together. This raised hopes for an era of genuine multilateralism. However, those hopes vanished quickly and were replaced by the realization that unilateralism and confrontation were again dominant.

One example of such confrontation was the debates on the International Criminal Court, which extended even to the Security Council. Holding these debates implied, ironically, that the International Criminal Court jeopardized peacekeeping operations of the United Nations. As a State party to the Rome Statute, we welcomed the entry into force of the Statute on 1 July as a true landmark in the history of international justice. We remain fully committed to preserving the integrity of the Court's Statute. We found it therefore disquieting that the Council dealt with the International Criminal Court in a manner suggesting that the Court posed a threat to international peace and security.

The Security Council, above all, is called upon to uphold the rule of law. The state of affairs worldwide makes it abundantly clear that credible and effective action by the Council is needed now more than ever. Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) illustrates how determined action by the Council can contribute to fighting real threats to international peace and security. My Government has attached the highest priority to the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee established pursuant to that resolution. We submitted on time two comprehensive reports on our national implementation

thereof. One year after the inception of the Committee's work, we have to take stock of its achievements and of the challenges ahead. There are obviously different stages of implementation worldwide and diverging capacities of States, especially in the area of combating the financing of terrorism.

Thus, it is imperative to introduce minimal standards to which all States need to adhere. Such an effort to set and implement benchmarks will ensure the practical impact and continued political relevance of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. We all must strive to bring our national enforcement and cooperation mechanisms to the highest achievable standards. This, however, must be accompanied by a set of minimum standards which are observed and enforced globally. As stated on previous occasions, Liechtenstein stands ready to make its contribution to developing such standards and to contribute to compliance enhancement by offering our extensive practical expertise.

Injustice must not be fought through injustice. The fight against terrorism must therefore go hand in hand with basic standards of the rule of law. Overzealous action must not, as has occurred in some instances, jeopardize the rights of the individual. Non-derogable human rights, as contained in the relevant international treaties, must be safeguarded under all circumstances. States have an obligation to ensure that people who are suspected of having committed acts of terrorism are treated in accordance with the relevant standards. The United Nations, as the primary international law-making body, has a special responsibility in this respect and has to live up to its obligation to be the guardian of the rule of law.

When the United Nations is called upon to uphold the rule of law, it must, of course, ensure first and foremost the legality of its own actions in all areas and, in particular, when it comes to armed action and intervention. The Charter of the United Nations provides for the sanctioning of such action by the Security Council. The debates of the past few weeks have made it clear that nothing can replace — as Secretary-General Kofi Annan put it so aptly — the unique international legitimacy provided through a decision of the Council. Legality, and thus political credibility, are ensured through seizing the Council. At the same time, however, the full implementation of all such decisions must be ensured. This must therefore be the way to go for the international community.

The President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados, Her Excellency The Honourable Billie Miller, MP.

Ms. Miller (Barbados): It is my pleasure to join with preceding speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. Barbados pledges its fullest cooperation in the year ahead.

I also take this opportunity to convey our deepest appreciation to Mr. Han Seung-soo for his leadership during a very challenging fifty-sixth session.

We, too, wish to welcome the Swiss Confederation and look forward to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste's joining this family of nations.

The Preamble to the Charter of this Organization expresses in the simplest yet most eloquent of terms the essential goals of multilateralism. We know its every phrase and recognize its solemn commitment

> "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom"

as well as

> "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security".

These goals remain as relevant today, and yet, in many ways, as painfully elusive as they were in 1945.

In January 2001, the international community ushered in a new century with the highest of expectations for the successful implementation of the millennium development goals, which we had just adopted. We were resolved to work with renewed vigour to eradicate poverty and hunger, fight the scourge of HIV/AIDS and disease, raise the level of human development and bring an end to debilitating economic and social injustices. Tragically, the events of 11 September 2001 eclipsed our millennium vision and brutally reshaped the global agenda.

In the intervening year, we have been forced to re-examine our traditional notions of security and to come to terms with the reality of our growing political and economic interdependence. For no single nation can hope to have all the answers to the complex issues that confront us and no lasting solutions are possible

except through collective effort. If nothing else, the lessons of 11 September have served to reinforce the value of multilateralism.

For the past several years, Barbados has argued for a redefinition of the concept of security to embrace the new and non-traditional threats that have the greatest potential to cause harm to our citizens, destabilize our societies and erode the basic institutions of governance. At the hemispheric level, we promoted dialogue on these issues among foreign ministers of the Organization of American States at our recent General Assembly session in Barbados, where we adopted the Declaration of Bridgetown on the multidimensional approach to hemispheric security. We believe that this approach to security is equally valid in the wider international context.

As we are well aware, threats to world peace are no longer exclusively found in military conflict between opposing countries, where the enemy is recognized and a state of war formally declared. Today's greatest sources of instability and threats to national, regional and international security lie in areas where the enemies are often unidentified non-State actors with global reach. Terrorism is but one of those insidious new elements. We are equally alarmed by the growing danger posed to democratic societies and Governments by the modern transnational phenomena of narco-trafficking, organized crime, money-laundering, corruption and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We are also aware of the potential for grave economic and social dislocation posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, environmental degradation and ecological and natural disasters. In addition, the inequitable application of the benefits of trade liberalization has created the very real prospect of increasing poverty and further economic disenfranchisement for the smallest and most vulnerable countries in the developing world. Under the circumstances, we have little choice but to persist in the struggle to gain international acceptance for our demands for special and differential treatment to prepare our small economies to meet the challenges of globalization.

Modern threats to international peace and security constrain the capacity for political and economic development and social progress. All nations share in the responsibility to respond to those threats, but we can only do so successfully through collective strategies, which address all aspects of the problem simultaneously. Diversion of resources and attention from the development agenda to the fight against terrorism cannot produce lasting results. As Dr. Brundtland warned in 1992, our global village may yet become a global jungle if States adopt unilateral measures to combat global problems.

Small developing countries are beset daily by fundamental challenges to their economic sustainability. From our perspective, security has of necessity revolved around policies in support of social development, economic viability, good governance and the promotion of democracy. For us, military engagement is not an affordable option.

For Barbados, as for all small States, the doctrine of non-intervention is of paramount importance for our survival. Pre-emptive unilateral action, no matter what the apparent cause, is a precedent that occasions in us the gravest discomfort. It is, therefore, vital that, at this dangerous and uncertain juncture in world affairs, we reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism and to the pre-eminent role of the United Nations in seeking to impose responsible behaviour through diplomacy and dialogue rather than through the use of force.

In response to the events of 11 September and to the mandates of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), Barbados has deployed considerable financial and human resources to the anti-terrorism effort. In May this year, our Parliament adopted comprehensive domestic legislation, which entailed an amendment to our Constitution, to criminalize acts of terrorism and support or financing for such acts. Yesterday I deposited with the United Nations Secretariat the relevant instruments to make Barbados a party to the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

We have been prompt and responsible in fulfilling our obligations to the international community in that regard, despite the heavy financial strain that has placed on our national economy, already deeply affected by the adverse impact of 11 September on its major productive sectors — tourism and financial services. As I reminded the General Assembly last year, small countries like my own are not part of the problem, but we are committed to being part of the solution, in circumstances that place a disproportionate burden on our financial, human and administrative resources, already struggling to respond to the global economic recession.

Regrettably, that burden has been further exacerbated by the words and actions of some lawmakers who now seek, through misguided zeal, to brand the operations of financial services centres, even the most transparent and well regulated, such as the Barbados regime, as havens for corporate tax evasion and for the laundering of terrorist assets. It is important to emphasize that the Barbados jurisdiction is more transparent and better regulated than many in the developed world, and certainly no less so than what obtains in the states of Delaware and Vermont, among others. My country fully intends to defend its reputation against those renewed, unwarranted, duplicitous and discriminatory attacks.

In this post-11 September, post-Doha, post-Enron world, many of the assumptions about peace and progress in a globalized economy have been challenged. We have entered a prolonged international recession, whose consequences have impacted on all countries. It is trying times such as these that force policy makers at the national level to simplify, refocus and prioritize.

It is opportune for us to undertake a similar exercise in respect of the United Nations. We must return this Organization to its basic mandate, and seek to have its energies and focus redirected towards substantive action in the twin areas of peace and development. The unique attributes of the United Nations and its multilateral structure can serve to build consensus and promote cooperation in the search for solutions to the most pressing problems affecting human security.

The international summits and global conferences, which have proliferated over the last decade, have been successful in mobilizing Governments and, to a greater extent, civil society, as well as sensitizing people to the most compelling development issues facing the planet. Although they have created awareness and raised expectations, they have not delivered with respect to implementation, and most of their fiercely negotiated plans of action remain under-funded and under-executed. The promises and pledges of the past 15 years have not been fulfilled. It is high time that we review the utility of those costly processes and seek simpler, more effective structures to carry forward our development agenda. The dwindling resources available for developmental programmes are better used for development itself than for scripted dialogue to discuss the process of development. Fundamental changes are needed in the way that development is financed, and in the structure, operation and coherence of the global financial architecture. Monterrey must not become just another failed process.

Barbados welcomed recognition by the World Summit on Sustainable Development of the vulnerability and sustainable development challenges of small island developing States, and looks forward to a frank, comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action in Mauritius in 2004. The Summit made a commitment to the sustainable management of ocean space, and it is in this vein that Barbados will continue to work towards achieving international recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a "special area" in the context of sustainable development.

For Barbados, our greatest resource lies in the creativity and resilience of our people. We are persuaded that the betterment of the human condition is the fundamental objective of economic progress. The HIV/AIDS pandemic rates with terrorism and narco-trafficking as one of the major new and emerging threats to human security. According to information provided by the Pan American Health Organization, there are currently 2.8 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the Americas. Of that number, 420,000 live in the wider Caribbean, accounting for over 2 per cent of its adult population. In response to the international Declaration of Commitment, Barbados has established a target of a 50 per cent reduction in the HIV/AIDS mortality rate and in the incidence of the disease over the next three years. We are also working towards the enactment of appropriate anti-discriminatory legislation by 2006. Our National Commission continues to support the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS, which is coordinated by the Caribbean Community Secretariat. Barbados is one of four English-speaking Caribbean countries selected to participate in the Caribbean HIV/AIDS Regional Training Initiative. The World Bank, of whose programmes Barbados is a graduate, made special provisions for the securing of a $15.1 million loan to procure the highly active anti-retroviral therapy programme for HIV-positive Barbadians, free of cost at point of delivery.

Barbados' commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter has been unwavering over its three and a half decades of membership in this Organization. We have paid our contributions faithfully and have consistently

supported the Organization's efforts to promote and protect human rights, to eradicate poverty and to cultivate a global culture of peace.

A tangible demonstration of that commitment was made on 2 January of this year, when the Prime Minister of Barbados had the honour of officially handing over to the United Nations Secretary-General, for the exclusive use of the United Nations agencies operating in the Eastern Caribbean, a custom-designed common premises building, now known as United Nations House. Secretary-General Annan's personal presence in Barbados for the inauguration ceremony was interpreted by Prime Minister Arthur as a clear expression of his understanding that every part of the United Nations family matters and that the contribution of the small States of the Caribbean to the objectives of the Organization is not without significance. For in the words of the Secretary-General, small States have become the backbone of the Organization in terms of their support and encouragement for the multilateral process.

The principles which guarantee a better quality of life for all peoples lie within our Charter. The global landscape has undergone tremendous change in the last 57 years, but the ideals of the Charter are indelible. Today we revisit this place to recommit to a process which, admittedly, is not perfect, but it is all that stands between us and anarchy. It is still our greatest hope for peace, development and social justice. In our generation, we cannot be expected to complete the monumental task which lies before us, but neither are we at liberty to abstain from it.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.